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**Public Affairs Office
Fort Riley, KS 66442
Telephone (785) 239-3033/3410 FAX (785) 239-2592
After Hours (785) 239-2222
E-mail: stephanie.perrin@riley.army.mil or
skidmord@riley.army.mil
www.riley.army.mil**



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT
Stephanie Perrin, Assistant Media Relations Officer (785) 239-3033

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SERVICE HONORS 'ANGELS OF MERCY'

By Mike Heronemus
Editor

Comrades, family members and strangers honored two fallen "angels of mercy" Aug. 18 at Morris Hill Chapel on Fort Riley.

They gathered to remember Sgts. Steven P. Mennemeyer and Jeffrey S. Brown, two 82nd Medical Company (Air Ambulance) Soldiers killed Aug. 8 in a helicopter crash in Iraq.

These two Soldiers, one a flight medic and the other a crew chief, were willing to "launch at the drop of a hat in bad weather, at night, with or without food or sleep, in dust storms into harm's way," said Lt. Col. Michael Tetu, commander of 2nd Battalion, 1st Aviation, Combat Aviation Brigade, at Fort Riley.

"They launched to a higher calling, to save someone's life," he said.

Army aviation is by its very nature dangerous work, Tetu pointed out. "Helicopters are dangerous. Even on the best day, something can go wrong in an instant," he said.

Despite the dangers in their line of work, Brown and Mennemeyer placed the welfare of others before them. They accepted those dangers and dedicated themselves to saving others they did not know, he said.

Maj. Dustin Elder, 82nd Med. Co. commander, recalled that Mennemeyer always performed his duties with dedication, zest and professionalism rarely seen in the Army.

Brown was one of the most experienced and hard-working crew chiefs in the unit, he added.

"As a flight medic, Sgt. Mennemeyer was second to none," said Master Sgt. Scott Heise, flight platoon sergeant in the 82nd Med. Co. "He was the first choice of many Soldiers when they were injured or not feeling well," he said.

Mennemeyer's professionalism could not be challenged, Heise said. "He would not take short cuts; he would not shirk his duties."

Brown was a hard-working crew chief who set the standard for fellow crew chiefs in the 82nd Med. Co., said Sgt. Brian Benson, reading comments from Brown's fellow Soldiers still in Iraq.

Beyond his professionalism as a crew chief, he was a close friend who was always able to boost morale by doing something as simple as walking into a room and starting a conversation, Benson continued.

Together, Mennemeyer and Brown flew more than 50 medical evacuation missions "to save others lives. There is no better definition of 'hero,'" Elder said.

Although their loss is a time of sadness, Elder urged those gathered to focus instead on "the countless lives they touched and saved. This is their enduring legacy."